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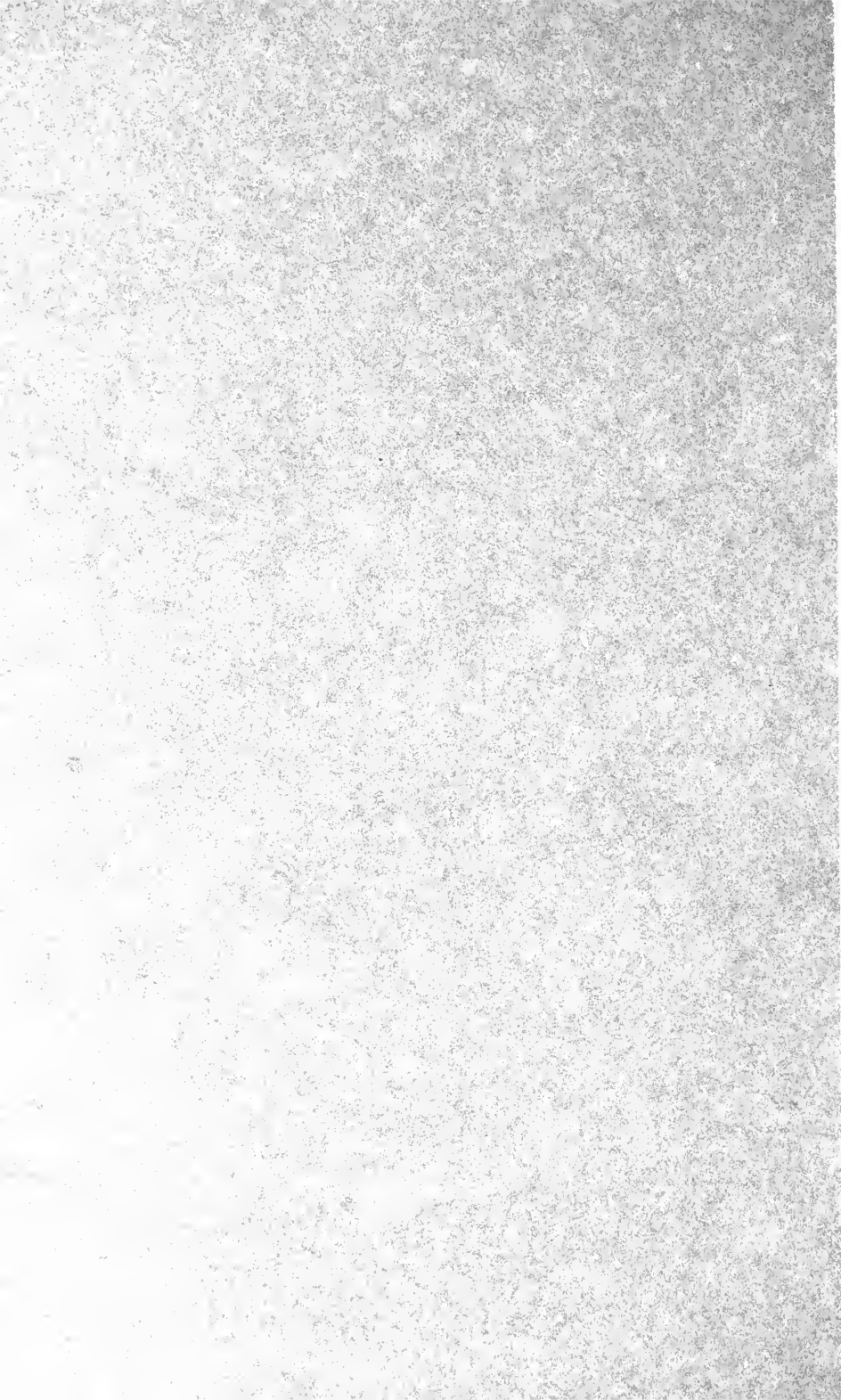
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SPEECH

OF

Hon. William Jackson Armstrong

OF

PERRIS, CALIFORNIA,

AUTHOR OF

"Siberia and the Nihilists," "The Masses and the Millionaires," "Civil Liberty," "Castelar and Spain," &c.

BEFORE

THE NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE PEOPLE'S PARTY

Omaha, July 4, 1892.



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tury to a dazzling myth. The idle millionaire is prince and lord; industrious poverty is his vassal. Not manhood but monopoly guides the affairs of the American State. New and tremendous forces disordering the distribution of wealth and changing the face of the planet go unrecognized by learning and ignored of law.

By the common toil of its people this nation has advanced* to wealth beyond the precedents or the dreams of history. Into the scheme of the division of this wealth has entered the applied science of the Louisiana Lottery. I beg the Lottery's pardon. I do it a wrong. That is an honest swindle. One hundred thousand thrifty gentlemen playing with notched cards against the nation's earnings have within thirty years drawn out of the game more than one-half of the possessions of the American people! It is a game they understand. A million of honest and willing workingmen daily tramp the highways of this republic and the streets of its cities hunting for the privilege of earning their bread! Ten thousand millionaires eat the daily bread which they do not earn. A quarter of a mil-

lion of American working women are starving in garrets and cellars on crusts that would not feed the cat of the millionaire. The millionaire gorges on the wine and the oil of the land while living, and prepares to lie under a marble mausoleum costing a hundred and fifty thousand dollars when he is dead. No dead American has a right to lie under a gravestone costing a hundred and fifty thousand dollars while a live American woman is starving in a garret!

In the homes of three millions of American farmers the extortion of monopoly blights the daylight of hope. The railroads have entered into an enforced partnership in the profits of the farmers' toil—with the farmers underneath in the partnership. The imperial lands of the west and south are pawned to the princes of the east—the gentlemen holding down morocco chairs in New York and London. The farmer becomes a tenant and serf on the soil where once he was lord. Cunning sits in purple and Labor runs in rags. To the best brain of this nation, reinforced by forty years of professional experience, we give ten thousand dollars a year to preside as chief justice of the United States.

To a successful dry goods clerk or a railroad manipulator we pay from the earnings of the people two millions of dollars a year for the pure pleasure of being gigantically robbed! To-day, under the most primly virtuous administration of this republic in half a century—the Administration in pantalettes—we witness the spectacle of a cabinet office given for the bribe of the largest donation to a campaign fund in the history of American politics. Hereafter it can be said, under Republican administrations of this country, at least, that the price of a cabinet portfolio to successful makers of trousers is a hundred thousand dollars!

In the presence of these appalling injuries to the rights of men and of citizens, the venerable institutions of our civilization are dumb with wisdom as the venerable owls of the leafy woods. (I apologize to the owls.) The church moans of the mysterious ways of Providence, and hypnotizes the faithful with the glitter of assurance that a certificate of virtuous poverty in this world will be honored as a bill of credit against the redundant riches of the next. The bar mutters of vested

interests, the rights of property, the sacredness of capital. Learning murmurs that social classes owe nothing to each other. Political parties are silent.

In this crisis it has once more happened in the history of human progress that the teachings of the people's sorrows have overleaped the learning of the schools and confound that learning with the spectacle of intolerable wrongs. We have therefore met to denounce the outrage of common and obvious justice. We have met to solemnly protest against the barbarous inequalities among classes of citizens under the flag of Equal Rights—to throttle the gilded lie in the throat of this republic. We have met to indict the savagery of a politico-industrial system that turns the toil of the masses into the temples of millionaires. We have met to affirm that the doctrine of unrestricted individual enterprise in the affairs of men has exhausted its epoch, and in an age unfitted to its theory runs riot to the injury of mankind. We have met to affirm that unearned riches have no sanctity—that vested interests are a myth and the rights of property a fiction. We have met to affirm that the

only sacred thing in this world is humanity—that the only thing having rights in this world is man—that all allegations contrary to these are glittering technicalities invented to confound the interrogations of justice for our kind. We have met to affirm our deliberate judgment that the sorrows of the poor are to be relieved by the justice of this world and do not await the mysterious judgments of the next. We are met to record our modest preference for cash payments here to unlimited sight drafts on the national banks of the hereafter. We are met to affirm that the legislation of states under which idleness becomes a prince and industry a pauper makes the citizen an enemy of the commonwealth—makes the anarchist and the tramp. We are met to affirm that in the solemn bond of interdependent human communities social classes owe to each other everything. We are met to assert that the policy of selfishness in the industrial scheme of men has proved a failure. We are met to affirm that for the good citizen and the good man there are nobler incentives to serve their generation than the lust for gold. From history's

twilight, since in the sweat of Egypt's children lordly Cheops reared his brow against the stars, till this latest noon of time when a new world is trodden from sea to sea by civilization's feet of lightning and of light, the men who have fashioned this planet to noble use, who, outfacing winter's frost and summer's fire, have laid on every zone and on every sea the grasp of human knowledge and of power, till man, save in length of years, does seem a very god of sense and might, these have not been the millionaires. They have been the lords of brain, the sons of toil, the masses of mankind, who, like Him of Nazareth, have often had no certain place to lay their head. We are met to challenge the lie of civilization itself—the preaching of its pulpits denied by the practice of its marts. We are here to commend to the conscience of Christendom the gods of its professed worship—the ethics of Christ as the creed of the industrial state.

The time is propitious. The old parties, Republican and Democratic, are dead — dead as the dust of Rameses and the Cæsars. They have not discovered the fact. Their piteous ghosts, like the spirit of Hamlet's father, are

doomed for a certain time to walk the earth. Re-enacting their scenes of knightly pageantry they move in procession, a mournful Mardi-Gras, over the surface of the body politic. Like the ancient dandy in the comic story, who had been a promising young man all his life, they have a great future *behind* them! Those pathetic conventions yonder in Minneapolis and Chicago! Cheerful stirrings amid the dry bones of political cemeteries! Churchyard whistlings for courage! They are hunting for the offices! Mighty instinct strong in death! The war was over a generation ago. State sovereignty sleeps untroubling in its grave. The bloody shirt, carried like the resurrected body of the Cid at the head of many curious triumphs, lies decently folded and fading in the museum of political curiosities. The negro, largely contented with his new rights, belongs to the classic anthology of party debate. The poor old Tariff! Shades of Calhoun and Jackson! the threshed straw! the sleeper's friend! reclaimed from the Republic's ancestral shadows and reduced to the rattle of a tin cup, furnishes feebly forth the dead march music of the funeral train.

Unlimited silver? a vital spark, betrayed, by either ghost—meaningless at best unless directed by other forces to the pockets of Toil.

To these dead we oppose our living. We unfurl the banner of the mighty future in the temple of American politics. That future is justice. We fare here so far forth as to resolve that step by step, as times and occasion permit, to plant in the fundamental policies of this nation the principles of absolute equity for all men. One step from the mediæval barbarism the modern Conscience has taken—the protection of the feeble from the mailed hand of force. We submit to the quickening reason of mankind that the guardianship of the lowly and simple from the velvet fingers of Cunning is also a trust of the modern state. For the crime of this disagreement with the venerable judgments of our time we bear the cross of its anathema. Ecclesiasticism through its oiled priests warns us of the "awful sanctions handed down from the beginning" for the protection of the plutocrat. Law recites against our purpose the precedents of its dusty centuries. The University thunders against the logic of our creed. Art admonishes that we violate the harmonies of the higher civilization. The Stock Exchange and the millionaire threaten the weight of their gold. The People's Party is here in the palpitating

flesh to meet the indictment. To the priest we say, "Go learn of your Master, the lowly carpenter of Nazareth." To the Law we say, "Simplify your precedents to the rule of honesty and common sense." To the University we say, "We are graduates of the learning of your cloisters and have entered the world." To Art we say, "Give to Labor its hire and we will train its children in thy graces and praise thy myrtles from the beginnings of days." To Wall Street and the millionaire we say, "*We will burst your infernal boom!*" To the bankers and the bandits of usury all, wreckers of civilization and pauperizers of mankind, we say, "The people will issue their own bills of credit."

Our monitors know not the theme of which they preach. That which turns the lettered wisdom of this period into folly and its legislation into crime is the fact that they stand for an age which has passed away. They linger in a generation which knows them not. While the college trims its science the world of which it dreams has slipped from under its feet—and that science has become the wisdom of the ancients. That science—that economy whose basis was the learning of Ricardo and Smith—concerned the *creation* and the acquisition of wealth. But a miracle has entered human labor. The gods of electricity, of steam and fire and force, have slain the industrial order

of the past. That old order of that old economy has vanished as a dream. The giants, the Titans of Greek myth, have come again to up-bear the earth. The laughter of wheels, the music of steam and steel have come to lighten the burdens of men. The production of wealth has increased a thousand fold. But with this increased production have come the appliances by which the multiplied wealth created by civilized man is plucked from the hands of its creators—by which the toil of the many is converted to the uses of the few. The once independent laborer who exchanged his hand-made products with his neighbor has changed to the serf of the machine. The citizens of this republic, like all the modern peoples, are becoming swiftly a nation of employees. The genius of man in the nineteenth century has outwitted itself! It has enslaved his race!

Before this gigantic miracle of change the learned economies of the schools are as the prattle of children—the cooing of sucking and helpless babes. The problem of this world is no longer the *production* of wealth, but the *distribution* of the riches created by its colossal energies—the equity of the division to the creators. In the presence of this problem our most venerable critics stand aghast. Let them prate: let them carry their dead: let them train their corpse: let them rehearse the funeral of the past, if they will. That problem is a ghost

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FELLOW AMERICANS:—On this sacred day of the Republic we are met here at the core of the continent to organize civilization's last fight for justice. We are here to re-baptize the flag of the stars in the sublime meaning of its birth.

□ It is the glory of our kind that there does not tread this globe a tribe of men so poor or so servile that it does not revolt against oppression. It is the superb distinction of our Anglo-Saxon race that for eight centuries it has led the van of the march for human freedom and has never lost the cause of right to the oppressor. Neither shall we fail here—no more than the barons at Runnymede, no more than Cromwell and Hampden, no more than Patrick Henry and Washington, no more than John Brown and Lincoln. From the heights of victory which we fail to conquer our children will look back in amazement on the storied wrong.

It is the splendor of our cause that its justice is complete, that its issues are more clear than the stars of the cloudless night. For nineteen hundred years the civilization which

we inherit has professed its parentage from the Sermon on the Mount. A million of church spires over the expanse of Christendom mark the sites of its temples of alleged faith in the brotherhood of man. A century and sixteen years ago—on the immortal date pictured on yonder banner—[pointing to the standard of the Massachusetts delegation], the mighty declaration which gave this Republic birth transformed the doctrine of that faith from a sentimental abstraction into a practical motto for the government of peoples. In the face of these facts the industrial policies of nations have remained savage and unchanged. Under the shadow of the church spires the economies of human communities have remained pagan. Intellectual might and cunning have remained the law of right, the battle of life a grab game—victory for the strongest, the devil for the hindmost. Amid the palaces of the rich are heard the groans of the starving poor. To the appeal of Lazarus Dives answers still, like Cain of old, “I am not my brother’s keeper.” In the teeth of the great Declaration the equality of American manhood has dwindled at the end of a cen-

which will not down—the Sphinx of the modern roadway. It stands there, alert, silent, expectant. Behind it, in serried ranks, stand two hundred millions of the toilers of this world! It cannot be laid save by the sacred wand of justice waved in the councils and practice of civilized states. There are no solved problems that have left out the right.

It is the people, the masses from their fields and forges, the plundered workers of hand and brain, who here take up the problem which the wisdom of the learned knows not and dares not to face. The People's Party! There is no longer warfare: there is no longer division. The hot brain of Craft, the conservative Conscience of Agriculture meet at last in common cause—the latest miracle of our time! Hand in hand, the farmers and mechanics—the men from field and factory and forge are here. (The newspaper man is expected to arrive.)

Under the sun of brotherhood the feuds of sections have melted like waxen wings. Our brothers of the knightly and generous South are here. Yonder [pointing to the standards] sit Texas and Tennessee, and Alabama and Virginia, and Mississippi and Arkansas and Louisiana! Yonder are the loyal sons of Georgia and the Carolinas—the old South blent in the new! They are near our hearts. Let them have kingly welcome here! The People's Party! Americans all, and lovers of our common country, we give

warning here to the ghosts of dead political factions, to obstruction under every masque, not that there *should* be, but that there *shall* be a change.

With malice toward no class of our fellow citizens we undertake the great mission. We shall carve and we shall achieve. Defeat will not chill us and derision will fail. We have entered the lists. We dare the right. We smite full on its front the mailed wrong. The world is in its callow, barbaric youth. We invoke the aid of the brain and heart of our time—of all the brave and just. We stretch our hands in fraternal sympathy to the struggling peoples of the earth. From this heart of the continent we look to the four corners of the great land. The dawn is creeping on the hills! It is the *real* morning of the world. Amid the shadows lifts the vision of the grander Republic. The struggle of man against his fellow has ended : his war is with Nature alone. A smile is on every lip. The spectre of Fear has been dragged from the homes of all the lowly. Upon the Republic's brow, gilding with the sun, is set the sign of eternal hope for man. It is the achievement of the Common People ! It has been so written that when Religion was dumb, when Art and Law and Learning failed, the bronzed hand of Labor, which had fashioned the palaces of the proud, wrought once again, in love and charity, and saved the fortunes of our race !

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